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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON ROBERT ZOELLICK'S VISIT TO CENTRAL AMERICA, OCTOBER 1, 2003

¶1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" on 10/1 entitled "Softening". "This week, USTR Robert Zoellick is visiting Central America in an attempt to convince the regional governments of the need to make progress on CAFTA negotiations."

"In addition, Zoellick will try to dissuade Guatemala and Costa Rica from taking part in the G-22, which includes other Latin American countries led by Brazil. This group proposed the total elimination of agricultural subsidies during the latest WTO meeting in Cancun, an issue that has been a nuisance for Washington."

"During his trip to the region, Zoellick will meet with the Central American presidents, the Ministers of Economy, Congressmen, CAFTA negotiators, businessmen and civil society representatives, trying to soften the position of these sectors by stressing the benefits Central America will obtain through a free trade agreement with the U.S."

Palmer